



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/823,305	04/13/2004	Scott Dewey	GP-303515	4775
7590	06/15/2006		EXAMINER	
CARY W. BROOKS General Motors Corporation Legal Staff, Mail Code 482-C23-B21 P.O. Box 300 Detroit, MI 48265-3000			MURALIDAR, RICHARD V	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2838	
DATE MAILED: 06/15/2006				

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Offic Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/823,305	DEWEY, SCOTT	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Richard V. Muralidar	2838	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears in the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 April 2004.
 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
 6) Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
 10) The drawing(s) filed on 4/13/2004 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ . |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____. | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ . |

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Barbetta [U.S. 6762587] in view of Yoshino et al. [U.S. 4937521].

With respect to Claim 1, Barbetta teaches a monitoring system [Fig. 1, 2, 3 fuel cell monitoring system] for monitoring the voltage potential of fuel cells in a fuel cell stack [Figs. 1, 2, 3 fuel cell stack 10, 20; col. 1 lines 12-20; col. 2 lines 36-43; col. 4 lines 6-12]; a conductor [Fig. 1, conductor 12; col. 4 lines 25-29; col. 5 lines 36-47; Fig. 2; conductive trace 21] positioned proximate to a voltage measuring means [Fig. 1, meter 13; col. 4 lines 30-35; col. 5 lines 52-63 the meter comprises attenuator 4 and amplifier 5]; a plurality of switches [Fig. 8, multiplexer 2; co. 6 lines 37-41] electrically coupled to the fuel cells and to the conductor [Fig. 7; col. 5 lines 52-63], said switches being selectively switched on and off to separately and selectively couple each fuel cell in the fuel cell stack to the conductor and generate a current flow therethrough [col. 7 lines 22-32]. Barbetta teaches a differencing amplifier 5 connected to an attenuator 4 (i.e. a voltage divider, col. 6 lines 14-17) as shown in Fig. 7 and disclosed in col. 5 lines 52-64, which is connected directly to the multiplexer 2 for reading the voltages of individual cells; said differencing amplifier providing an output signal indicative of the

Art Unit: 2838

voltage potential of the selected fuel cell [col. 5 lines 52-63]. Barbetta does not teach an intermediate stage between the fuel stack multiplexer (plurality of switches) and the differencing amplifier, comprising a Wheatstone bridge with a GMR resistor and two output ports.

Yoshino teaches a current sensor [col. 1 lines 8-12] comprising a Wheatstone bridge [Fig. 11; col. 8 lines 32-38], said Wheatstone bridge including at least one giant magnetoresistive (GMR) resistor [Fig. 11, magnetoresistor 1; col. 5 lines 7-13] and two output ports [Fig. 11, nodes 8a and B prime]; that includes sensing a magnetic field generated by the current flow through the conductor reduces the resistance of the GMR resistor and unbalances the Wheatstone bridge [col. 5 lines 37-41 and lines 52-55; col. 7 lines 4-5]; and a differencing amplifier [Fig. 11, comparator 40; col. 8 lines 38-41] electrically coupled to the output ports of the Wheatstone bridge.

Barbetta and Yoshino are analogous current measuring devices. At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to add a Wheatstone bridge with GMR type resistors to Barbetta for the benefit of accurately reading current/voltage of each cell whilst ensuring isolation existed between the cell's high voltage and the measurement electronics, particularly since Barbetta's sensor is connected to a conductive trace [Barbetta- col. 5 lines 36-43], and Yoshino's sensor is designed to sense current flowing through a conductive trace, without touching it [Yoshino- Fig. 11; col. 3 lines 49-63]. Additionally, Wheatstone bridges with GMR type resistors used to measure current from magnetic fields are widely known in the art, and would function *exactly the same way* whether connected to a single battery, multiple batteries, or multiple fuel-cells.

With respect to Claim 2, Barbetta teaches the switches are FET switches [col. 7 lines 37-41].

With respect to Claim 3, Yoshino teaches the at least one GMR resistor is two GMR resistors [Fig. 13, GMR resistors 1].

With respect to Claim 4, Yoshino teaches the conductor is an electrical trace positioned beneath the Wheatstone bridge [col. 1 lines 8-12; col. 3 lines 49-64; col. 5 lines 7-13].

With respect to Claim 5, Barbetta teaches a polarity reverser, said polarity reverser reversing the polarity of the current from the fuel cells before the current is applied to the conductor so that the current through the conductor is always in the same direction [this is accomplished by the switches of multiplexer 2 shown in Fig. 8, in conjunction with the switch controller, which results in current flowing in only one direction on the output line 3].

With respect to Claim 6, Barbetta teaches least one voltage divider [Fig. 7, attenuator 4 is a voltage divider- col. 6 lines 14-17] electrically coupled between the fuel cells and the conductor.

With respect to Claim 7, Barbetta teaches a controller [Fig. 7, microprocessor 7; col. 5 lines 52-66] for controlling the switches to separately measure the voltage potential of each fuel cell and for receiving the output signal from the amplifier [Fig. 7, amplifier 5].

With respect to Claim 8, Barbetta teaches a plurality of opto-isolators for isolating the high voltage of the fuel cell stack and the switches from the low voltage of the

controller [col. 7 lines 22-32 and lines 37-41, isolation may be provided, such as with mechanical relays; col. 6 lines 34-36, opto-isolators may also be used to provide isolation].

With respect to Claim 9, Barbetta teaches the system monitors the fuel cell stack on a vehicle [col. 3 lines 12-17].

With respect to Claim 10, Barbetta teaches a monitoring system [Fig. 1, 2, 3 fuel cell monitoring system] for monitoring the voltage potential of fuel cells in a fuel cell stack [Figs. 1, 2, 3 fuel cell stack 10, 20; col. 1 lines 12-20; col. 2 lines 36-43; col. 4 lines 6-12]; *an electrical trace* [Fig. 1, conductor 12; col. 4 lines 25-29; col. 5 lines 36-47; Fig. 2; conductive trace 21] positioned proximate to a voltage measuring means [Fig. 1, meter 13; col. 4 lines 30-35; col. 5 lines 52-63 the meter comprises attenuator 4 and amplifier 5]; a plurality of *FET switches* [Fig. 8, multiplexer 2; co. 6 lines 37-41, MOSFET switches] electrically coupled to the fuel cells and to the conductor [Fig. 7; col. 5 lines 52-63], said switches being selectively switched on and off to separately and selectively couple each fuel cell in the fuel cell stack to the conductor and generate a current flow therethrough [col. 7 lines 22-32]; and a *controller* [Fig. 7, microprocessor 7; col. 5 lines 52-63] for controlling the switching of the FET switches to separately measure the voltage potential of each fuel cell and for receiving the output signal from the amplifier. Barbetta teaches a differencing amplifier 5 connected to an attenuator 4 (i.e. a voltage divider, col. 6 lines 14-17) as shown in Fig. 7 and disclosed in col. 5 lines 52-64, which is connected directly to the multiplexer 2 for reading the voltages of individual cells; said differencing amplifier providing an output signal indicative of the

Art Unit: 2838

voltage potential of the selected fuel cell [col. 5 lines 52-63]. Barbetta does not teach an intermediate stage between the fuel stack multiplexer (plurality of switches) comprising a Wheatstone bridge with a GMR resistor and two output ports.

Yoshino teaches a current sensor [col. 1 lines 8-12] comprising a Wheatstone bridge [Fig. 11; col. 8 lines 32-38], said Wheatstone bridge including at least one giant magnetoresistive (GMR) resistor [Fig. 11, magnetoresistor 1; col. 5 lines 7-13] and two output ports [Fig. 11, nodes 8a and B prime]; that includes sensing a magnetic field generated by the current flow through the conductor reduces the resistance of the GMR resistor and unbalances the Wheatstone bridge [col. 5 lines 37-41 and lines 52-55; col. 7 lines 4-5]; and a differencing amplifier [Fig. 11, comparator 40; col. 8 lines 38-41] electrically coupled to the output ports of the Wheatstone bridge.

Barbetta and Yoshino are analogous current measuring devices. At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to add a Wheatstone bridge with GMR type resistors to Barbetta for the benefit of accurately reading current/voltage of each cell whilst ensuring isolation existed between the cell's high voltage and the measurement electronics, particularly since Barbetta's sensor is connected to a conductive trace [Barbetta- col. 5 lines 36-43], and Yoshino's sensor is designed to sense current flowing through a conductive trace, without touching it [Yoshino- Fig. 11; col. 3 lines 49-63]. Additionally, Wheatstone bridges with GMR type resistors used to measure current from magnetic fields are widely known in the art, and would function *exactly the same* way whether connected to a single battery, multiple batteries, or multiple fuel-cells.

With respect to Claim 11, Barbetta teaches a polarity reverser, said polarity reverser reversing the polarity of the current from the fuel cells before the current is applied to the trace so that the current through the trace is always in the same direction [this is accomplished by the switches of multiplexer 2 shown in Fig. 8. in conjunction with the switch controller, which results in current flowing in only one direction on the output line 3].

With respect to Claim 12, Barbetta teaches at least one voltage divider [Fig. 7, attenuator 4 is a voltage divider- col. 6 lines 14-17] electrically coupled between the fuel cells and the trace.

With respect to Claim 13, Barbetta teaches a plurality of opto-isolators for isolating the high voltage of the fuel cell stack and the FET switches from the low voltage of the controller [col. 7 lines 22-32 and lines 37-41, isolation may be provided, such as with mechanical relays; col. 6 lines 34-36, opto-isolators may also be used to provide isolation]

With respect to Claim 14, Barbetta teaches a method [Abstract, lines 1-3] for monitoring [Fig. 1, 2, 3 fuel cell monitoring system] the voltage potential of fuel cells in a fuel cell stack [Figs. 1, 2, 3 fuel cell stack 10, 20; col. 1 lines 12-20; col. 2 lines 36-43; col. 4 lines 6-12]; providing a conductor [Fig. 1, conductor 12; col. 4 lines 25-29; col. 5 lines 36-47; Fig. 2; conductive trace 21] positioned proximate to a voltage measuring means [Fig. 1, meter 13; col. 4 lines 30-35; col. 5 lines 52-63 the meter comprises attenuator 4 and amplifier 5]; selectively and separately electrically coupling the fuel cells to the conductor to generate a current flow through the conductor [Fig. 7; col. 5

lines 52-63; col. 7 lines 22-32]; and a differencing amplifier [Fig. 7, amplifier 5] providing an output signal indicative of the voltage potential of the selected fuel cell [col. 5 lines 52-63]. Barbetta does not teach an intermediate stage between the fuel stack multiplexer (plurality of switches) and the differencing amplifier, comprising a Wheatstone bridge with a GMR resistor and two output ports.

With respect to Claim 15, Barbetta teaches the method according to claim 14 wherein selectively and separately electrically coupling the fuel cells to the conductor includes using FET switches [Fig. 8, multiplexer 2; co. 6 lines 37-41, MOSFET switches] to selectively and separately electrically couple the fuel cells to the conductor [col. 7 lines 22-32].

With respect to Claim 16, Yoshino teaches providing a conductor positioned proximate to the Wheatstone bridge includes providing an electrical trace positioned beneath the Wheatstone bridge [col. 1 lines 8-12; col. 3 lines 49-64; col. 5 lines 7-13].

With respect to Claim 17, Yoshino teaches providing a Wheatstone bridge includes providing a wheatstone bridge including two GMR resistors [Fig. 13, GMR resistors 1].

With respect to Claim 18, Barbetta teaches providing a polarity reverser for reversing the polarity of the current from the fuel cells before the current is applied to the conductor so that the current through the conductor is always in the same direction [this is accomplished by the switches of multiplexer 2 shown in Fig. 8. in conjunction with the switch controller, which results in current flowing in only one direction on the output line 3].

With respect to Claim 19, Barbetta teaches providing at least one voltage divider [Fig. 7, attenuator 4 is a voltage divider- col. 6 lines 14-17] electrically coupled between the fuel cells and the conductor.

With respect to Claim 20, Barbetta teaches the fuel cell stack is on a vehicle [col. 3 lines 12-17].

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Richard V. Muralidhar whose telephone number is 571-272-8933. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:00-5:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Karl D. Easthom can be reached on 571-272-1989. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Application/Control Number: 10/823,305
Art Unit: 2838

Page 10

6/8/2006
RVM


Adolf Deneke Berhane
Primary Examiner